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TAPE PLAYED IN BEN BARKA KIDNAPING

But It Turns Out To Be
Scenario For Cops-
Robbers Story

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Paris, Jan. 27 (A)—A dramatic aspect of the ben Barka scandal fizzled today when a tape recording seized in the home of a key figure turned out to be nothing but the plot for a gangster movie.

The recording had been widely billed in advance as the eye-witness testimony of the late Georges Figon concerning his own, somewhat foggy role in the kidnaping of Mehdi ben Barka, Moroccan opposition political leader, from a Left Bank sidewalk last October 20. Ben Barka has not been seen since.

Several prominent persons in the scandal, including five defendants and the victim's brother, were crowded into a judicial chamber of the Palace of Justice to listen to the tape allegedly made by Figon about a week before his death.

Cops-And-Robbers Story

It was found among Figon's effects following his death the night of January 17 when police closed in to arrest him. Police say Figon committed suicide.

A French newsman, a friend of Figon, maintained Figon had made a tape-recorded statement in his presence to corroborate an interview published by the weekly magazine *L'Express*. It was hoped this statement was on the tape found at the apartment.

But when the police seals were removed from the tape, and the playback machine was turned on, the first part of the tape proved to be the outline of a scenario for a cops-and-robbers story which Figon had been writing. The remainder of the tape was blank.

Defendants Summoned

One of the five defendants, a free lance journalist named Philippe Bernier who is accused of enticing ben Barka to his last known rendezvous, told examining Magistrate Louis Zollinger the first part of the tape was the scenario for a film. Ben Barka was on his way to meet Bernier in connection with another projected film when he was kidnaped.

Zollinger summoned the defendants, their attorneys, and court officials to his chambers to hear the tape. Ben Barka's brother, Abdelkader, who launched the police inquiry with a John Doe warrant, also was present.

The judge staged the hearing as a sort of general confrontation of all the accused who might possibly be mentioned in Figon's alleged statement. But with only the scenario on the tape, the hearing, behind closed doors, lost its dramatic effect.